

Message Text

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R 110510Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1699

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0356

ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SO ECON

SUBJ: DROUGHT IN SOMALIA?

REF: NAIROBI 0895

1. SUMMARY: BY THE TRADITIONAL STANDARDS OF THIS ARID COUNTRY, DROUGHT CONDITIONS ARE NOT THOUGHT TO PREVAIL IN SOMALI AT PRESENT. HOWEVER, RAINS IN 1973 WERE BELOW AVERAGE, AND A SIGNIFICANT FAILURE OF THE RAINS DUE IN THE LATE SPRING OF 1974 MIGHT LEAD TO A DROUGHT SITUATION. EMBASSY WILL MAKE CONTINUING ENQUIRIES. END SUMMARY.

2. IN VIEW DROUGHT CONDITIONS REPORTED IN ETHIOPIA AND MORE RECENTLY IN KENYA (REFTEL), AND IN VIEW POSSIBLE GSDR RELUCTANCE TO CALL ATTENTION TO SUCH CONDITIONS IN SOMALIA IF THEY EXISTED, EMBASSY HAS MADE POINT OF DISCUSSING SUBJECT WITH LOCAL UN PERSONNEL, INCLUDING ACTING RES. REP. AND LOCAL HEAD OF WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WHO SUBMITS QUARTERLY REPORTS TO FAO ROME), PLUS THOSE

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FEW OTHER ACCESSIBLE PERSONS LIKELY TO HAVE INFORMED JUDGMENT.

CONSENSUS IS THAT CURRENT DRY SEASON CONDITIONS, JUDGED BY THE ADMITTEDLY HARSH STANDARDS OF SOMALI NOMAD LIFE IN SEMI-DESERT TERRAIN, DO NOT NOW CONSTITUTE A DROUGHT SITUATION.

3. RAINFALL IN 1973 IS CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN DEFINITELY LESS THAN AVERAGE; BUT 1972 RAINS WERE UNUSUALLY GOOD, RESULTING IN A GOOD GROUND WATER SUPPLY AND A HEALTHY LIVESTOCK HERD FOR TWO YEAR PERIOD AS A WHOLE. IMPORTANT QUESTION NOW CONCERNS MAIN ANNUAL RAINY SEASON THIS YEAR, DUE TO COMMENCE IN APRIL OR MAY. IF THERE IS SERIOUS FAILURE OF SPRING RAINS THIS YEAR, FOLLOWING RATHER LIGHT RAINS LAST YEAR, DROUGHT CONDITIONS MIGHT WELL DEVELOP. IRRIGATED FARMS ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY LACK OF WATER IN SCHEBELLI RIVER, WHICH NOW VIRTUALLY DRY FROM GIOHAR, FIFTY MILES UPSTREAM FROM MOGADISCIO. TRAVEL OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL OUT OF MOGADISCIO AREA IS GREATLY RESTRICTED BY GSDR, BUT WE WILL FOLLOW SITUATION AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE THROUGH CONTACTS WITH THE RELATIVELY FEW UN AND OTHER KNOWLEDGABLE PERSONS ACCESSIBLE TO US WHO VISIT AREAS OF POTENTIAL DROUGHT.

4. GENERALLY SPEAKING, ANIMALS IN MOGADISCIO AREA LOOK DISTINCTLY WELL FED. MOST LIKELY DROUGHT PROBLEM AREAS WOULD BE IN NORTHWEST, AND IN EXTREME SOUTHWEST ALONG KENYAN BORDER (YET HERE TOO MOST ANIMALS LOOKED REASONABLY WELL FED TO RECENT EMBASSY TRAVELLER). NORTHEAST IS ALSO DRY, BUT SUPPORTS RE-

LATIVELY SMALL HUMAN AND ANIMAL POPULATION. EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME ANY SIGNIFICANT REPORTS OF DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN SOMALIA COMING TO ATTENTION OF US MISSIONS IN ADDIS OR NAIROBI.
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